United Nations A/HRC/28/64/Add.2

General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 January 2015

Original: English

Human Rights Council
Twenty-eighth session
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Rita Izsák

Mission to Nigeria (17 to 28 February 2014)*

Summary

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and linguistically diverse society, where the great diversity of the population constitutes a valuable asset and rich cultural heritage. Nevertheless, the management of such a diverse population poses important challenges that have not been fully addressed and that require good and inclusive governance and the full implementation of minority rights.

Nigeria's Constitution guarantees the right to equality and non-discrimination and contains provisions conducive to fostering the equal representation of diverse groups at the different governmental levels, in the application of the federal character principle. Nevertheless, the distinction between those considered the native inhabitants of a territory (indigenes) and those who are not (settlers) leads in many cases to discriminatory treatment of citizens in fields such as access to land and resources, public positions, university education and scholarships, and has contributed to tensions and created and reinforced ethnic and religious cleavages.

While, in most of the country, harmonious and peaceful inter-ethnic relations prevail, Nigeria has seen violent intercommunal clashes in some States, particularly in the North and Middle Belt regions, which have left thousands of victims. Root causes of violence are complex and intertwined, involving several factors, such as the issue of indigenes/settlers, competition for resources, poverty, good governance deficits, impunity and polarization of ethnic and religious characteristics. Such factors and their underlying

* The summary of the present report is circulated in all official languages. The report itself, which is annexed to the summary, is circulated in the language of submission only.

GE.15-00038 (E)

1500038

Please recycle

causes must be adequately addressed through specific programmes and investment directed to the most disadvantaged groups. In order to address the issue of violence, impunity must be tackled, perpetrators must be held accountable for their crimes and victims must be adequately redressed.

Many areas in the Niger Delta are still suffering from dire environmental degradation due to frequent oil spills. Affected communities, including the Ogoni and Ikwerre groups, have been deprived of their traditional livelihoods and face difficulties in gaining access to basic services. Urgent clean-up operations of polluted areas are required and concrete measures needed to guarantee alternative means of livelihood and adequate services to affected communities.

Nigeria's rich linguistic diversity encompasses hundreds of minority languages, though several of them are under threat. Government programmes to preserve the major minority languages are contributing to safeguarding Nigeria's linguistic heritage. However, further measures are required, including provisions for language education in lesser used languages.

Annex

[English only]

Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Rita Izsák

Contents

I.	Introduction	1–5	4
II.	Methodology	6–7	5
III.	Historical background	8–12	5
IV.	Non-discrimination and equality: legal and institutional framework	13–19	7
V.	Identity, ethnicity and religion	20–48	8
	A. Indigenes/settlers dichotomy	20–24	8
	B. Minority groups in the Middle Belt region	25–35	9
	C. Religious minorities in Plateau and Kaduna States	36–48	11
VI.	Minority groups in the Niger Delta	49–58	13
VII.	Governance and political participation	59–66	14
VIII.	Linguistic rights	67–73	16
IX.	Conclusions and recommendations	74–102	17

I. Introduction

1. The Special Rapporteur on minority issues visited Nigeria between 17 and 28 February 2014. She visited Abuja, where she conducted extensive consultations with senior federal government representatives, including the Minister of the Interior, senior officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Culture, the National Human Rights Commission and the Federal Character Commission. She visited Plateau and Kaduna States, where she consulted with State authorities as well as with the National Human Rights Commission branches in Jos and Kaduna. She travelled to Port Harcourt in Rivers State, where she met with authorities and local communities. She held numerous meetings with non-governmental organizations, minority communities, youth representatives, religious leaders, academics, journalists and representatives of United Nations bodies. She thanks the Government for its cooperation and thanks those organizations and individuals that provided valuable information and facilitated aspects of her visit.

2. Nigeria is an ethnically and linguistically diverse country, with over 350 ethnic groups and even more languages spoken within its territory. According to the most recent census, conducted in 2006, the population of Nigeria stood at 140 million people. According to the most recent data provided by the World Bank in 2014,[1] the total population stands at 178.5 million, making Nigeria the most populated African country.

3. The three largest ethnic groups in the country are the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Other large ethnic groups include the Ekoi, Edo, Fulani, Ibibio, Idoma, Igala, Ijaw/Izon, Itsekiri, Gwari, Jukun, Kanuri/Beriberi, Nupe, Urhobo and Tiv. Muslims constitute about 51 per cent of the population, while Christians comprise approximately 47 per cent and almost 1 per cent of the population professes traditional religions. There are no official data on the religious and ethnic composition of the population, but most Muslims constitute a majority in the northern states, while Christian populations are predominant in the southern states. The majority of Hausa and Fulani are Muslim, while Igbo are predominantly Christians and Yoruba present a varied religious composition.

4. Nigeria is Africa's largest economy, with the above-mentioned World Bank data putting its gross domestic product growth at 6.5 per cent in 2012, and with oil accounting for nearly 75 per cent of the country's consolidated budgetary revenues. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Nigeria receives more foreign direct investment than any other country in Africa.[2] Notwithstanding Nigeria's strong macroeconomic performance, a number of human development indicators and socioeconomic statistics reveal profound deficits that must be addressed: the poverty rate has reached 48 per cent of the population, with stark disparities between regions; poverty is particularly concentrated in the northern regions, while the south-west has the lowest poverty rates;[3] in 2011, almost 24 per cent of the population was unemployed;[4] the infant under-five mortality rate ranks among the highest in the world, with 124 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2012;[5] and the school attendance rate is low, with only 54 per cent of children

[1] Available from www.worldbank.org/en/country/nigeria.

[2] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *World Investment Report 2013* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.II.D.5) p.241. Available from http://unctad.org/en/publicationslibrary/wir2013_en.pdf.

[3] See World Bank, Nigeria Economic Report, 2013, pp. 8 and 9.

[4] National Bureau of Statistics, 2011 Socio-Economic Survey: Unemployment 2011. (Download available from www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pages/download/38.)

[5] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Nigeria Basic Indicators, available from www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nigeria_statistics.html.

of secondary school age going to school, and with vast differences across States and gender disparities favouring boys over girls.[6]

5. Despite the lack of specific data on socioeconomic indicators for minorities, available studies point to minorities as being particularly affected by poverty and low socioeconomic conditions. For instance, in the oil-rich Niger Delta region, minority communities, such as Ogoni or Ikwerre, rank among the poorest population groups, with many lacking access to clean water or health care.

II. Methodology

6. The Special Rapporteur's analysis of Nigeria is based on the 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and other relevant international standards, from which she has identified the following areas of concern: (a) the protection of a minority's survival, through combating violence against them and preventing genocide; (b) the protection and promotion of the cultural identity of minority groups and the right to enjoy their collective identity and to reject forced assimilation; (c) the guarantee of the rights to non-discrimination and equality, including ending structural or systemic discrimination and the promotion of affirmative action when required; and (d) the guarantee of the right to effective participation of minorities in public life, especially with regard to decisions that affect them. She applies a gender perspective in all the areas of her work.

7. The Special Rapporteur focuses her work on national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups, whose generally non-dominant, disadvantaged positions within society require measures to allow them to exercise all their rights, including minority rights, to the fullest. She notes that, in accordance with general comment 23 of the Human Rights Committee on article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,[7] the existence of minorities is neither dependent on a decision by the State alone nor limited only to those officially recognized minorities, but should be based on objective and subjective criteria and the principle of self-identification. Consideration given to minority issues in her analysis of Nigeria does not only reflect the national context, but also extends down to the State and local contexts, where the dynamics and dimensions of identity, ethnicity, religion, language, political participation and access to resources play a crucial role in the daily lives of individuals and communities. She acknowledges that the notions of "minority" and "majority" are changeable and dependant on the context analysed. Majority groups at the national level may be minority groups at the State and local levels. Equally, minority ethnic groups in a region may be the majority religious groups and vice versa.

III. Historical background

8. A brief overview of the contemporary history is necessary to understand the current situation of minorities and the political structure, legislation and policies that have shaped present-day Nigeria. The following information was obtained from public governmental and civil society sources.

---

[6] UNICEF, Nigeria Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2011, pp. 171-185. (Available from www.unicef.org/nigeria/Multiple_Indicators_Cluster_Survey_4_Report.pdf).

[7] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 40*, vol. I (A/49/40 (Vol. I)), annex V.

9. Modern Nigeria has been greatly influenced by its colonial history under the British in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During the nineteenth century, the British gained influence over a vast territory in West Africa that included several kingdoms and domains. At the end of that century, the British Empire established in the Delta region the Niger Coast Protectorate while it expanded its influence over the region. In 1903, the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria was established and the colonial rule over the territory known as Nigeria began.

10. During the British colonial period (1900-1960), the territory was subjected to frequent regional reorganizations for administrative purposes. The Niger Coast Protectorate became Southern Nigeria, while in the northern part strategic alliances were made with local leaders to control the different territories; local governments were left in the hands of the traditional rulers, but were ultimately supervised and controlled by British officers, a policy known as "indirect ruling". In 1914, the South and North regions were merged into the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria. In 1954, a federal constitution further divided the territory into three regions (North, East and West), where the major ethnic groups (Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba) held dominant positions over the others. As the London conferences in 1957 and 1958 for the independence of Nigeria were ongoing, minority groups, fearing a future domination by the three major groups after independence, started to advocate for the creation of separate states.

11. In 1957, the British Government appointed the Commission on Minority Groups in Nigeria (known after its Chairman as the "Willink Commission") with the mandate "(1) To ascertain the facts about the fears of minorities in any part of Nigeria and to propose means of allaying those fears, whether well- or ill-founded; (2) To advise what safeguards should be included for this purpose in the Constitution of Nigeria; and (3) If, but only if, no other solution seems to the Commission to meet the case, then, as a last resort to make detailed recommendations for the creation of one or more new States". The 1958 report of the Commission did not recommend the creation of new States, on the grounds that they would soon lead to new minority groups with similar claims, and instead encouraged a balance of power between the different groups under a united Nigerian State. The Commission suggested broad measures, including the establishment of councils in each "minority area" that would "foster the well-being, cultural advancement and economic and social development of the minority area and to bring to the notice of the regional government any discrimination against the area".

12. In 1960, Nigeria attained independence and, in the following years, significant territorial changes took place aimed at providing ethnic minority groups with more autonomy. In 1963, a fourth region (Mid-Western region) was created; in 1967, the four regions were broken up into 12 states and, by 1976, the number of states within the Federation had reached nineteen. At present, , the country comprises 36 states, in addition to the Federal Capital Territory, where the capital city Abuja is located, and six geopolitical zones.[8] Several civil society organizations highlighted that, despite the number of territorial reorganizations, the issue of minority groups has not been solved and, in many States, tension between dominant and non-dominant groups persist.

[8] The National Conference that took place in 2014 recommended the creation of 18 additional states; see Final Draft of Conference Report, p. 280, available from https://media.premiumtimesng.com/national-conference/wp-content/uploads/National-Conference-2014-Report-August-2014-Table-of-Contents-Chapters-1-7.pdf.

IV. Non-discrimination and equality: legal and institutional framework

13. Statistical analysis is of paramount importance for an accurate identification of the ethnic, religious and linguistic make-up of a country as diverse as Nigeria. Data collection plays a vital role in revealing inequalities between groups in society and informs appropriate actions to address them. The Special Rapporteur notes that Nigeria does not collect or analyse data disaggregated by ethnicity, religion or language. Some civil society organizations as well as the National Human Rights Commission stated their concern over the lack of disaggregated statistical data and the outdated census information, given that the census was last conducted in 2006. Other voices, however, were reticent about the collection of disaggregated data, stating fears that sensitive data could be manipulated for political ends.

14. The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria is the supreme law and enshrines the principle of equality and non-discrimination under its article 42, paragraph 1, which contains general non-discrimination provisions on the grounds of belonging to "a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion".

15. The Constitution establishes in its article 14, paragraph 3, the so-called "federal character principle", which aims to ensure that public appointments reflect an equal representation of all groups at the federal Government level by affirming that "the composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or in any of its agencies". Article 14, paragraph 4, further guarantees the participation of the different groups at the state and local levels, by affirming that "the composition of the government of a state, a local government council, or any of the agencies of such government or council, and the conduct of the affairs of the government or council or such agencies, shall be carried out in such manner as to recognize the diversity of the people within its area of authority and the need to promote a sense of belonging and loyalty among all peoples of the Federation".

16. Despite these provisions, several interviewees stated that the federal character principle was not applied in practice, because it only reflected the political representation of states at the federal level without applying other criteria, such as ethnic affiliation, in order to guarantee that all groups are adequately represented at the different government levels (local, state and federal).

17. The Federal Character Commission is a constitutionally sanctioned independent body made up of 37 commissioners representing the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. It was established by Decree No. 34 of 1996, with the mandate to give effect to the federal character principle, and is entrusted with "the responsibility to promote, monitor and enforce compliance with the principles of the proportional sharing of all bureaucratic, economic, media and political posts at all level of government". The Commission's main functions include monitoring compliance with the Commission's guidelines of the recruitment procedures by the Government, investigation of complaints, enforcement measures in case of failure to comply with the Commission's guidelines and data analysis.

18. The National Human Rights Commission was created by a 1995 act that was subsequently amended in 2010 to provide it with additional powers. As an independent human rights monitoring body, it investigates alleged cases of human rights violations and makes recommendations to the Federal Government, receives and investigates complaints concerning human rights violations, assists victims and seeks appropriate redress and

remedies on their behalf, conducts studies on all matters pertaining to human rights, organizes seminars, workshops and other related activities. Since 2010, the decisions made by the Commission's Governing Council have been deemed as decisions of the High Court. The Commission has branch offices located in each of the six geopolitical zones.

19. Nigeria is a State party to the core international human rights treaties of particular importance to the rights of minorities, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and other key treaties. Nigeria is also a State party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance.

V. Identity, ethnicity and religion

A. Indigenes/settlers dichotomy

20. The Constitution contains a provision in its article 147, paragraph 3, relative to the appointment by the President of "at least one Minister from each State, who shall be an indigene of such State". However, the Constitution does not provide a definition of "indigene" or "settler" status. Those interviewed described a socially entrenched distinction between those recognized as the original inhabitants of a State (indigenes) and those who are not (settlers).

21. The Special Rapporteur was informed that the distinction between indigenes and settlers can be traced back to colonial times, when British rule promoted alliances with certain ethnic groups, imposing differentiated treatment to groups and allowing the rise of new dominant ones. Community and civil society representatives repeatedly highlighted the relevance of the categorization of indigenes/settlers at the state and local levels in today's Nigeria, and its profound impact on people's lives. It was pointed out that those regarded as "indigenes citizens" are given preferential access to public resources, government jobs, university education and scholarships and access to land, opportunities not provided to the "settlers".

22. In order to confirm the status of "indigene person", a "certificate of indigeneship" issued by the local government is required. In the light of the absence of guidelines to regulate the indigeneship status, local and state governments enjoy total discretion to grant it or not. The Special Rapporteur was informed that long-term residency in a state, even if for generations, is not considered a criterion that entitles a person or community to be considered indigenes, and therefore long-term residents are often denied indigeneship certificates.

23. Supporters of the so-called "indigenes clause" maintain that this status is meant to protect the rights of minority groups in States where indigenes are no longer a numerical majority. In Kaduna and Plateau States, the Special Rapporteur met with some community leaders who claimed that "indigeneship is defined by owning land, customs and traditions", that permitted the preservation of the linkage with their ancestors. She also met with critics of the "indigenes clause", who affirmed that this distinction had led to a privileged status for some citizens and constituted a violation of the right to equality and non-discrimination enshrined in the Constitution.

24. Some civil society representatives advocated for the introduction of clearer provisions in the Constitution to regulate the status of indigeneship, on the grounds that the current constitutional provision is vague and subject to discretional interpretation. Several

participants strongly advocated for a "residence clause", whereby specific residency requirements based on length of residence in a region replaced the indigene/settler dichotomy.

B. Minority groups in the Middle Belt region

25. The Special Rapporteur visited Plateau and Kaduna States, comprising the so-called "Middle Belt" region, a central area characterized by its ethnic and religious diversity. The region, and particularly Plateau and Kaduna States, have been the scene of several violent intercommunal clashes among ethnic and religious communities over the past decades, resulting in over 10,000 deaths since 1992.[9] The terrorist group Boko Haram has recently been responsible for numerous deadly attacks across the country, particularly in the North and the Middle Belt, including bomb attacks resulting in more than 2,000 deaths in the first half of 2014 alone.[10]

26. In the course interviews, including with security forces, representatives of the National Human Rights Commission headquarters in Jos and Kaduna, Plateau State authorities, Muslim and Christian leaders and victims of intercommunal violence, the Special Rapporteur was informed that the root causes of the intercommunal episodes of violence are diverse, complex and intertwined, involving the issue of indigenes/settlers, competition for resources, climate change, poverty, good governance deficits, partisan politics, impunity and the use of ethno-religious dimensions for political purposes, given that in many situations ethnic and religious identity overlap.

27. The distinction between indigenes and settlers has played a significant role in the conflicts in the Middle Belt. In Plateau and Kaduna States, some ethnic groups who have lived in the region for generations are still regarded as settlers and therefore cannot benefit from certain economic and social opportunities. In Plateau State, indigene ethnic groups are mainly Christian, while Muslim Hausa-Fulani residents and pastoralists are regarded as settlers. Disputes include competing claims to indigene status, inequality in access to politics owing to the difficulties and/or impossibility to run for elections for settlers, the use of land and access to university education and scholarships, where indigenes have preferential treatment.

28. Civil society representatives in Jos stressed that, in most places, there are no legal provisions prohibiting the political participation of settlers at the local and state levels, but there is "a social prohibition", owing to the fear of indigene communities that settlers will augment their power by running for elections. This prohibition, which would ignite feelings of frustration and resentment, was identified as a relevant trigger of violence. Civil society actors stated that political interference and the imposition of Government-favoured candidates over more popular candidates can provoke violence if the pro-Government candidate wins. The need for good governance as a mean to lessen tensions was repeatedly emphasized.

29. During the consultations held in Plateau and Kaduna States, it was commonly stated that the economic aspect of the situation of disadvantaged minority groups could not be underestimated when analysing the root causes of the conflicts in the Middle-Belt region. High levels of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy were identified as concrete socioeconomic issues contributing to fuelling intercommunal violence. The lack of social

[9] Human Rights Watch, *Leave Everything to God. Accountability for Intercommunal Violence in Plateau and Kaduna States, Nigeria* (2013), available from www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/nigeria1213_ForUpload.pdf.

[10] See www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/15/nigeria-boko-haram-kills-2053-civilians-6-months.

and economic opportunities was regarded as a main driver that resulted in competition for resources and growing suspicions and hostility among groups. Minority women and girls were regarded as particularly affected by low socioeconomic status and insecurity.

30. Interviewees in Jos and Kaduna explained that competition for land between nomadic pastoralists and local farmers was a major conflict-generating issue in both Plateau and Kaduna States; the arrival of herders from Northern Nigeria, most of them Fulani Muslims in search of new grazing routes, is perceived by farmers, mostly Christians, as a threat to their economy and lifestyle. Pastoralists resent their limited access to public resources and feel discriminated against. The effects of climate change are also a cause of land competition in that, owing to the increasing desertification and droughts affecting the north, the grazing lands where pastoralists can take their herds have been reduced, forcing them to move south. In parallel, local farmers in the Middle Belt have been taking more land for cultivation, in some cases including long-agreed grazing routes for herders, resulting in a reduction of places for herders to water and graze their stock.

31. Most civil society and government representatives asserted that the current religious and ethnic dimensions of the conflicts were not a primary cause by themselves, but a result of the use of these factors by the different groups in order to mobilize and reach out to a larger number of people to their cause. This has added an extra layer of complexity to the situation while extending the conflict, owing to the escalation of violence through retaliation. A commentator said that "if a person of an ethnic or religious group is killed, that person goes and kills people of the other group".

32. Most people consulted repeatedly highlighted the widespread lack of accountability and impunity for instigators and perpetrators of violence. It was noted that law enforcement is of paramount importance to guarantee the principle of rule of law and to prevent violence from escalating further; in fact, participants in consultations affirmed that impunity was reinforcing the cycle of violence and retaliatory actions, leading people to take the law into their own hands.

33. State-sponsored security initiatives have been launched in both Plateau and Kaduna States to tackle the recurring episodes of violence affecting the region. A special joint security initiative, "Operation Rainbow", began in Plateau State in 2010, inspired by a similar security initiative implemented by Kaduna State known as "Operation Yaki". Operation Rainbow is entrusted with "ensuring peace and security of lives and properties on the Plateau through the process of proper articulation and deployment of all embracing measures that would adequately address and contain the democratic values and rule of law issues that have potentials of leading to crisis in the state".

34. Operation Rainbow was framed as a multi-faceted intervention that focuses on four different dimensions: (a) political, through fostering dialogue with a range of stakeholders to promote good governance; (b) economic, by implementing youth and women empowerment programmes as well as training courses to promote employment; (c) social, by encouraging dialogue among a wide range of stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, traditional rulers, religious leaders and family members; and (d) security, through the deployment of security forces. Operation Rainbow includes a system of "neighbourhood watch", where specially trained members of communities gather and report relevant information to prevent violent conflicts. It was acknowledged that shortages in relation to police resources, such as lack of fuel for police vehicles, must be addressed.

35. Civil society actors stated that security forces must be given sufficient and adequate capacity, training and resources to perform their duties. Training in human rights must be an integral part of security forces' instruction. Nevertheless, they noted that sustainable solutions to communal violence require not only a heightened security response, but also a comprehensive approach that addresses the underlying causes of violence, particularly good

governance deficits, failure to hold perpetrators accountable and low socioeconomic status of certain vulnerable groups.

C. Religious minorities in Plateau and Kaduna States

36. Nigeria is a multi-faith society where religion plays an important role in people's daily lives. In most cases, religious communities live harmoniously in a climate of mutual respect and acceptance, work together to foster interfaith dialogue, engage in shared activities for the benefit of their communities and strengthen understanding and dialogue between them.

37. Plateau and Kaduna States comprise large communities of Christians and Muslims that have coexisted peacefully. Nevertheless, in some locations, the climate of mutual trust and respect among interreligious communities has been eroded over recent years, leading to growing feelings of mutual suspicions and fears. In some cases, the divisions have become geographical, with separate neighbourhoods emerging along religious lines. It was stated by some commentators that, in Kaduna State and its capital, the northern part is predominantly inhabited by Muslim Hausa-Fulani communities while Christian ethnic groups were moving to the southern part.

38. Episodes of intercommunal violence in both States have affected members of both Christian and Muslim communities, which constitute religious minority groups depending on their location in each State. Some victims of intercommunal violence reported growing levels of religious intolerance and reprisals on the grounds of their religious beliefs, including physical attacks.

39. The Special Rapporteur met with Christian victims of violence in Jos. They recalled an attack against them and other members of the community in 2012 perpetrated by groups they described as radical Islamists. The victims referred to the "radical ideology" of the attackers as the root cause of the violence. They claimed to have reported the attack to the police but that no action had been taken against the perpetrators. The victims insisted on the need for accountability for justice and as a meaningful and effective deterrent. They regretted what they regarded as a total impunity of those responsible for instigating and conducting the attacks.

40. The Special Rapporteur visited the internally displaced persons camp of Mandu Hajj in Kaduna South and held interviews with some Muslim victims who were still living in the camp (they were required by authorities to leave by the same day). They recalled the attack suffered by their community in Kaduna State in 2011, in which a mob of people started to burn the houses of the community following the announcement of the presidential election results. Dozens of people were reported to have died during the attack. Some contended that the attack was mainly politically motivated, while others maintained it was religiously motivated but sparked by political factors. They stated that security forces did not arrive when the attack started, despite the numerous calls made. A victim affirmed that he was told that the police could not go because "they did not have fuel in the cars". It was stressed that the perpetrators were currently free and had not been convicted or arrested.

41. The Special Rapporteur witnessed the poor conditions in which the victims had to live at Mandu Hajj camp, where they were placed after the attack, including overcrowded rooms separated by sexes and not on the basis of family ties and lack of electricity and water supply. Some babies were reported to have died due to diarrhoea and other infections during the months the camp was operative. The victims indicated that the Government had promised them compensation to rebuild their houses but they had only received a minimal amount that did not cover their expenses.

42. The Special Rapporteur met with leaders of the Muslim and Christian communities in Plateau and Kaduna States. In Jos, she met leaders of the Muslim community, who highlighted that the root causes of the violence against Muslims in the State included the stigmatization of the Muslims, which had been caused by a widespread perception of Muslims as "threats". Political leaders were accused of playing a key role in fuelling the tensions. Muslim leaders also stressed that Boko Haram did not represent Islam in Nigeria or globally and had also targeted and killed Muslims.

43. Leaders highlighted other problems faced by the Muslim community, including the impossibility to obtain an indigenes certificate despite numerous years of residence, the lack of adequate political representation at the local and state levels and difficulties in gaining access to university, given that scholarships were reserved for indigenes. One of the participants stated that "this means making marginalized communities more marginalized".

44. In Kaduna, the Special Rapporteur met with the Executive Secretary of the Northern Christian Association of Nigeria. He claimed that distorted religious principles lay at the root of the problems and violent episodes of intercommunal conflicts. He noted that political competition was another factor leading to intercommunal conflicts, as the Christian community had begun to get more involved in politics and governance. He affirmed that, in order to address the menace of Boko Haram, it was necessary to combine an effective security response with appropriate education measures, including human rights education in the school curriculum.

45. While recognizing the profound problems and diverse challenges that threaten sustainable peace in the Middle Belt, the Special Rapporteur was impressed by numerous initiatives led by the civil society and religious leaders to achieve conflict resolution and bridge the gap between communities in both Plateau and Kaduna States. In Jos, she learned about examples of Muslim leaders working in partnership with Christian leaders to address together the conflicts and find adequate solutions collaboratively.

46. In Kaduna, the Special Rapporteur met with the leaders of the organization Christian-Muslim Alternative to Conflict, which was established in 2013. The organization gathers several Christian and Muslim groups and its main focus is to promote dialogue and mediation in community conflicts as a tool to achieve peace and foster interreligious dialogue. She also learned about the activities of the Interfaith Mediation Center, a non-governmental organization founded in 1995 that had been conducting peacebuilding and mediation work to settle conflicts between Muslim and Christian communities across the Middle Belt.

47. The Special Rapporteur was pleased to learn about peacebuilding initiatives led by women. She met with the president of the Women Without Walls Initiative, an organization jointly founded and run by Christian and Muslim women in Jos that works to implement a non-violent and inclusive approach to conflict resolution through various educational community projects targeting women and young people. Its initiatives include the rehabilitation of schools, organization of conflict management seminars for young people and the implementation of programmes to foster women's economic empowerment. The Initiative also promotes awareness of the role of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

48. Other peacebuilding initiatives led by women included a peace education project in Bauchi carried out by a young woman using her own resources who had been working with hundreds of children in different schools to foster understanding, trust and mutual acceptance among them as well as to engage them with children in other countries affected by conflict.

VI. Minority groups in the Niger Delta

49. The Niger Delta is located in the Southern part of Nigeria, comprising an area of 70,000 km^2 that encompasses nine States: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers. The Niger Delta is crossed by the Niger River, the largest river in Nigeria, in a land covered with swamps, rainforests and woodlands. It is a region extremely rich in natural resources, particularly in oil, which was discovered in the 1950s.

50. The Niger Delta is home to a large number of ethnic groups and communities, including Ijwa, Ikwerre, Itsekiri, Isoko, Ogoni and Ukwuani. The Special Rapporteur travelled to Rivers State, where she visited Port Harcourt, the Ogoni communities of Bodo and Goi and the Ikwerre community of Rumuekpe.

51. In Port Harcourt, representatives of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People briefed the Special Rapporteur on the current situation of the Ogoni communities. Ogoniland is located in Rivers State and covers around 1,000 km^2. It has been the site of oil industry operations since the late 1950s. Ogoniland suffers from severe and well-documented environmental pollution from oil spills and oil well fires that have contaminated the land, water, vegetation and air, with a devastating impact on the livelihoods of many Ogoni communities. In a 2011 report, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) found that oil contamination in Ogoniland was "widespread and severely impacting many components of the environment".[11] It also noted that most residents had lived with chronic oil pollution throughout their lives, with grave impacts on their health and livelihoods, as well as the presence of high levels of contaminants, including the known carcinogen benzene, in communities' drinking water.

52. In the report, UNEP stated that the environmental restoration of Ogoniland was possible, but warned that it would take 25 to 30 years. The recommendations contained in the report included the creation by the Government of an Ogoniland Environmental Restoration Authority to oversee the implementation of the recommendations and the establishment of an Environmental Restoration Fund with an initial provision of $1 billion. In July 2012, a special unit within the Federal Ministry of Petroleum Resources, the Hydrocarbon Pollution Restoration Project, was created and entrusted with the mission to protect and restore the environmental human rights of all communities affected by hydrocarbon pollution in Nigeria.

53. In Bodo community, some Ogoni leaders described the Ogonis as "a minority within a minority" and highlighted the main problems faced by the community, particularly the effects of the oil spills that they allege to be caused by the petrochemical company Shell, which have severely polluted the soil and the water, resulting in health problems, limiting farming and creating a food crisis. They claimed that neither the federal nor the local government had visited the community to inquire about their situation. They described having each being offered financial compensation by Shell that they had refused to accept, considering it inadequate. The representatives stated that they wanted the oil company to access the community and clean the polluted area.

54. Other areas of concern stressed by the Bodo community leaders included the underrepresentation of Ogoni people in politics and the declining situation of the Ogoni language, which is no longer included in the school curriculum, the only mandatory languages since 1986 being Ibo, Hausa and Fulani. It was noted that the Ogoni language was featured on local television for only 15 minutes per day, and not at all at the federal

[11] United Nations Environment Programme, *Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland* (Nairobi, 2011). (Available from http://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/OEA/UNEP_OEA.pdf.)

level. The representatives advocated for a multilingual education programme in schools that included teaching children their mother tongue. One of the community representatives said that "Once you lose the language, you lose your identity, and therefore who you are", and stated that between 80 per cent and 90 per cent of the children currently did not speak their local languages.

55. In Goi, community representatives stated that the land of the community had been abandoned owing to oil pollution. Many people in the community reportedly suffered from health problems, particularly asthma and skin-related diseases, and there was a high prevalence of miscarriages among women. The primary source of livelihood for the community was fishing, which had been lost when the water and soil became polluted. Goi representatives protested that the community had not been recognized as being affected by oil pollution. They reported a lack of basic services in the community, such as a hospital or a school. The Special Rapporteur visited areas of the community affected by oil spills and saw first-hand the devastating effects of oil pollution.

56. The Special Rapporteur visited Rumuekpe, an Ikwerre community that had been abandoned after an intercommunal conflict from 2005 to 2010. Community members commented that tensions within the community were linked to the disagreements over payments by oil companies to some community members. In 2010, the community had signed a peace agreement and some currently displaced people were returning to the area. During the visit, community representatives pointed out that, despite the fact that there were currently four oil companies operating in Rumuekpe, the community lacked basic services, such as a hospital, school and water supply. One commentator claimed that "the Government has not provided any service and always takes the side of the oil companies. They [oil companies] blackmail the Government by not paying revenues or stopping production in order to get what they want".

57. The Special Rapporteur consulted representative from Shell Nigeria to seek the company's views on the situation and to find out its activities in the Niger Delta. Shell informed her that the company had not operated in Ogoniland since 1993, but acknowledged that two of its pipelines passed through the Ogoni territory. Shell claimed that the profound environmental degradation was mainly due to oil spills caused by the sabotage of pipelines and bunkering (the illegal tapping of pipelines and small-scale refining). It indicated that, according to its own estimations, in 2012, 95 per cent of spill volumes were caused by sabotage and only 5 per cent were due to Shell's operations. The company stated that compensation to the affected communities was only payable in the event of an operational spill.

58. Shell affirmed that, if granted access to the territory of a community that has suffered an oil spill, it would clean up the polluted area. It indicated that Bodo community leaders had not granted them access to the community. It also stated that communities had denied it access to the sites in order to claim higher compensation. Shell representatives noted that it would like the Government to play a more active role in the development and regeneration of the area.

VII. Governance and political participation

59. It was frequently stated by civil society organizations, community representatives, youth groups and religious leaders that good governance and inclusive political participation were key factors to achieve social and political stability as well as a means to overcome many of the socioeconomic challenges faced by Nigeria at present. One commentator acknowledged that "Nigerians would care less about ethnicity and religion if poverty and inequalities were really addressed".

60. Several non-governmental organizations reported endemic corruption permeating the local, state and Federal political levels, and denounced the lack of budgetary transparency, which renders extremely difficult the monitoring and accountability of political actors. There was a commonly shared claim that revenues from petroleum, which constitute most of the national wealth, were not trickling down to communities. In the December 2013 report on Nigeria of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Côte d'Ivoire recommended that Nigeria "reinforce anti-corruption laws".[12] This recommendation enjoyed the support of Nigeria.

61. The Government stated that the Constitution provided equal opportunities for political participation. It was stressed that the Federal Character Commission was the body in charge of guaranteeing equality of State representation in Federal institutions and administrations, through the application of the federal character principle. This principle can be traced back to the quota system introduced in the recruitment procedures of the Nigerian Armed Forces before independence, as a means to ensure no particular group would be a majority in the army.

62. The Special Rapporteur met with several members of the Federal Character Commission in Abuja. They informed her about the work of the Commission to foster a regional balance in public representation, particularly the development of a set of guidelines for the distribution of posts in the federal public service, including a provision stating that the indigenes of any State shall not constitute less than 2.5 per cent or not more than 3 per cent of the total positions available, including junior staff at the head office. It was also stressed that ethnic and religious aspects were not taken into account in applying the federal character principle in order to preserve the secular character of the Nigerian State.

63. Numerous non-governmental sources contended that the fact that the Federal Character Commission did not consider ethnic and religious aspects in applying the federal character principle rendered the equality of the representation of States' groups ineffective. Some representatives of non-governmental organizations affirmed that it was necessary to rethink the mandate and composition of the Commission in order to establish a proportional representation to ensure that ethnic and religious diversity was fully reflected within national, state and local institutions.

64. The Special Rapporteur is concerned that, despite the relevant role played by women, particularly minority women, in civil society initiatives, she hardly encountered women participating in Government and political leadership. She was informed of the adoption in December 2006 of the National Gender Policy,[13] which includes among its goals "to achieve gender equity in political participation and representation, and to draw up mechanisms for the empowerment of women in politics". The National Gender Policy reserves a quota of 30 per cent of political positions for women, in order to increase the number of women in elective positions and decision-making processes. She was informed of the growing presence of women in high-level political positions, and the appointment of 13 women as ministers following the 2011 elections. Nevertheless, the political participation of women in Nigeria remains low; according to the United Nations Development Programme, only 32 out of 469 seats in the National Parliament are held by women, which constitutes 8 per cent of the total representation.[14] There is a lack of information regarding the political participation of minority women and the challenges they face in having their voices heard.

---

[12] See A/HRC/25/6, para. 135.9.

[13] Available from http://cewhin.org/pdf/National%20Gender%20PolicySituation%20Analysis.pdf.

[14] See www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/democraticgovernance/successstories/nigeria--a-boost-for-women-s-participation-in-politics/.

65. The Special Rapporteur welcomed the establishment of the National Dialogue Conference 2014, a nationwide forum convened in Abuja under the auspices of the Government to bring together a wide range of stakeholders (492 delegates representing ethnic groups, civil society organizations, political parties and professional associations, among others) to discuss and address the challenges Nigeria faces. Many civil society actors noted that the Conference could provide an ideal arena to discuss nationally long-standing minority issues and challenges and provide communities with a participatory role in this forum. Interviewees expressed hope that representatives of minority groups would be invited to attend the meetings.

66. The Special Rapporteur notes that further consideration of the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference 2014 are required in order to understand the implications for minority issues. However, she welcomed the recommendation of the Conference that States should establish a 35 per cent quota to ensure that women, minorities, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups participate and are represented in governance and other spheres of life.

VIII. Linguistic rights

67. According to estimates of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),[15] 27 languages are currently endangered in Nigeria. However, a pilot survey on endangered languages and cultures in Nigeria conducted by the Federal Ministry of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation in 2010 determined that there were 520 languages in the country, hundreds which fell into the category of "endangered language".

68. Diverse civil society actors also conveyed their concerns over minority languages in decline or at risk of disappearing within their territories and lamented those already lost. Many spoke passionately about the need to implement measures to protect their mother tongues. Various reasons have been given as the leading causes of the disappearance of minority languages, including the lack of mother-tongue instruction, the failure to include minority languages in the school curriculum, the lack of political willingness to promote local languages, the pressure exerted by languages spoken by large populations of speakers and the abandonment of native languages in favour of Nigerian Pidgin or English, among others.

69. It was evident that there were different and opposing approaches to how to tackle the problem of the decline and disappearance of minority languages in Nigeria. Some described the need to amend article 55 of the Constitution, which states that "the business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English, and in Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made thereof", considering it gives prevalence to three specific languages over all others. This approach was also very critical of the current language education curriculum in Nigerian schools, in which it is compulsory to study either Hausa, Ibo or Yoruba, in addition to English, and which does not have any provision regarding minority language education.

70. On the other hand, some were of the opinion that prioritizing Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba languages, the three most widely spoken languages, along with English, was beneficial. Those of this perspective maintained that it was not feasible to provide mother-tongue education in each of the minority languages, given their large number. Instead, they maintained that the primary responsibility for educating children in their mother tongue was

[15] Available from www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/index.php.

of parents. They also emphasized the importance and significance of keeping at least these three native Nigerian languages mandatory alongside English.

71. Representatives of the Ministry of Culture acknowledged they were in favour of the introduction of some criteria to teach local languages in schools and highlighted the importance of preserving minority languages as part of the cultural heritage of the peoples. As one of the representatives asserted, "once the language dies, the culture dies".

72. Article 4, paragraph 3, of the 1992 Declaration on Minorities calls on States to take appropriate measures so that, wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities may have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue. In its position paper on education in a multilingual world,[16] UNESCO asserts that mother-tongue instruction is highly beneficial in terms of school performance; it allows students learn to read more quickly and to learn to read in a second language more quickly, and students taught to read in their mother tongue also acquire academic learning skills more quickly.

73. The Special Rapporteur welcomed the programme implemented by the Ministry of Culture, currently in its second phase, to safeguard endangered languages, as well as the existence of the National Institute for Nigerian Languages, a specialized body in the Ministry of Education in charge of languages, a main objective of which is the promotion of "the study and use of Nigerian languages".

IX. Conclusions and recommendations

74. **The history and configuration of present-day Nigeria is inextricably linked to the existence of hundreds of ethnic groups and languages. For the most part, Nigeria has managed to achieve a relatively peaceful and harmonious coexistence among the different groups. However, such diversity also poses important challenges to manage and appropriately address intercommunal and minority issues and to foster the conditions to ensure continued peaceful coexistence. While the principle of equality and non-discrimination is recognized in the Constitution, in order to implement adequate measures to guarantee equality and minority rights it is necessary to know in depth the composition of all groups within the country and understand the inequalities, challenges and issues that exist.**

Indigenes/settlers dichotomy

75. **The Special Rapporteur considers the distinction between indigenes and settlers to be potentially damaging to intergroup relations and peaceful coexistence. It has opened and reinforced ethnic and religious cleavages and contributed to tensions and conflict. Some groups regard indigene status as a safeguard of their rights in the light of the growing numbers, influence and economic dominance of other groups, while others consider it a breach of the right to equality and non-discrimination. If this distinction is maintained, further legal clarity will be required to regulate the indigeneship status and guarantee that no person is unfairly discriminated against or excluded from access to services and resources, land or the right to participate fully in the economic, social, cultural and political life.**

[16] Available from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001297/129728e.pdf.

Middle Belt communities

76. The Middle Belt region comprises an ethnically, religiously and linguistically diverse mosaic of groups and communities, which for the most part have lived together in harmony and mutual respect. Nevertheless, over the past years, some States in the region have suffered episodes of intercommunal violence that, while exhibiting ethnic and religious dimensions, have root causes that are complex and multi-faceted. They are rarely based on ethnicity or religious factors alone.

77. The distinct status of indigenes and settlers and the unclear criteria to differentiate between them have frequently resulted in profound socioeconomic inequalities among citizens living in the same State. Many of those regarded as settlers have been living in a given State for generations and yet face insurmountable obstacles to exercise their rights to political participation at the local and State levels, access to public jobs, scholarships and land. This differentiated status has caused resentment among communities, contributed to fuelling tensions and paved the way towards episodes of violence.

78. The use of and competition for land has triggered many of the violent clashes among communities. The growing presence of pastoralists from the North in the Middle Belt region seeking grazing pastures for their livestock and the increasing cultivation of land by local farmers have resulted, in a number of cases, in violent intercommunal conflicts. The dynamics of these tensions and conflicts have grown in complexity when ethnic and religious affiliations of the groups involved have been mobilized.

79. Availability and exploitation of natural resources, and the impact of climate change in the North and Central regions, including desertification, droughts and food and water shortages, must be recognized as key issues and adequately addressed. The Government is urged to plan and implement coordinated National and State policies to fight the adverse effects of climate change and provide sustainable solutions to the use of land by different communities with competing lifestyles and livelihoods.

80. Federal and State Governments have acknowledged that socioeconomic factors, including poverty, high levels of illiteracy, unemployment and insufficient income levels are among the underlying causes fuelling tensions and violence among groups in the Middle Belt. Minorities are often among the most disadvantaged populations and experience the worst socioeconomic conditions. A comprehensive national plan against poverty and social exclusion should be urgently adopted, with clear objectives and specific benchmarks and timelines for completion. The plan should contain measures focused on the most vulnerable groups at the State and local levels, and include specific attention to the issues of minority women.

81. Members of Christian and Muslim communities reported what they perceived to be religiously motivated attacks against them. The Special Rapporteur is deeply concerned by the escalation of attacks by Boko Haram, which provides a distorted interpretation of religious principles to justify its violent actions. Leaders and members of the Muslim communities emphasized that Boko Haram represents neither Islam nor Islamic principles and that its attacks, including killings, kidnappings and destruction of properties, are also targeted against Muslims, are unacceptable and must be condemned. The Federal Government is urged to set up and implement as soon as possible a comprehensive security and prevention strategy to combat these unlawful actions by Boko Haram and/or other radical groups, in full compliance with human rights standards.

82. Lack of accountability and impunity were repeatedly stated as major flaws of the criminal justice system. A culture of impunity has extremely pernicious effects; investigations are not undertaken or poorly managed, prosecutions are not initiated or pursued, victims are left defenceless, the role of security forces is negatively perceived and, in many cases, people decide to take the law into their own hands. Perpetrators must be persecuted and held accountable for their crimes. Police and security forces must be trained in human rights and minority issues and provided with sufficient and adequate means to carry out their tasks. Mechanisms for adequate compensation and redress of victims must be implemented.

83. The Special Rapporteur stresses that sustainable solutions to communal violence require not only a heightened and effective security response, but also a comprehensive approach that addresses the underlying causes of violence, particularly good governance deficits, failure to hold perpetrators to account and low socioeconomic status of certain vulnerable groups.

84. The Special Rapporteur was impressed by initiatives led by a number of civil society actors directed at fostering intercommunal and interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding among communities in the Middle Belt. Those initiatives promote understanding and harmonious coexistence among communities, conflict prevention and conflict solution. She urges the Government to provide financial support to such initiatives and consider implementing similar projects where necessary.

Niger Delta communities

85. Oil industry operations began in the Niger Delta at the end of the 1950s. Numerous oil spills during the past 50 years have resulted in extremely grave environmental damage across the region, causing water and soil pollution and destroying the livelihoods of many communities. One of the areas particularly affected is Ogoniland in Rivers State, the home of the Ogoni people.

86. The Special Rapporteur witnessed the devastating effects of the oil spills in affected Ogoni and Ikwerre communities, including the destruction of traditional farming and fishing livelihoods owing to widespread soil and water pollution, severe health problems among community members and population migration to other areas. The lack of basic services and adequate facilities in the affected communities have further contributed to their situation of marginalization and abandonment. The authorities are urged to take effective measures to assist the communities in need, providing health care and education facilities and foster means for the creation of alternative livelihood options.

87. The Special Rapporteur is concerned that, to date, many areas polluted by oil spills in Ogoniland have yet to be cleaned. The Government, in coordination with oil companies implicated in the environmental damage, should implement the recommendations made by the 2011 United Nations Environment Programme report *Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland*,[11] including the proper maintenance of oilfield facilities and the decommissioning of facilities that are no longer used; the creation of training, employment and livelihood incentives to encourage people not to participate in illegal oil-related activities; the implementation of clean-up actions in all affected areas without further delay; the distribution of potable water to communities where drinking water wells do not comply with Nigerian national standards; and the monitoring of all such measures during and following clean-up operations, including tracking the health of communities exposed to oil pollution and providing adequate medical treatment when needed. Concerned communities must be consulted fully.

Governance

88. Good governance is essential for a fully democratic and inclusive Nigerian society, minority rights, social stability and the promotion of the rule of law. Nevertheless, a good governance deficit exists in Nigeria with implications for minority issues and rights and community relations. Good governance comprises different intertwined features, including inclusive participation, consultation, the fight against corruption, transparency of political decisions and accountability by political stakeholders. In the context of minority rights, good governance is an essential element to guarantee that minority groups who do not hold dominant positions participate in and are fairly considered when taking political decisions. Good governance plays a fundamental role in preventing tensions and conflicts, as it guarantees participation and the civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights of all groups.

89. Persistent allegations of widespread political corruption are serious concerns that affect minority rights and require an unequivocal response from the Government at all levels to effectively address those practices. Anti-corruption agencies should be strengthened and the establishment of a comprehensive national plan against corruption as well as new legislation should be considered. Budgetary transparency must be fully implemented as a means to effectively monitor political decision-making processes and to provide accountability mechanisms.

Political participation

90. It is of great importance to ensure representation of ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity at the different government levels. In order to guarantee equal participation at the federal level, the Federal Character Commission promotes the application of the federal character principle. Nevertheless, the Commission does not consider ethnic or religious elements, which leads many civil society groups to consider the principle of equal participation of the diverse groups ineffective in practice. The Special Rapporteur urges the Government to expand the scope of the federal character principle and the work of the Commission to include ethnic and religious identity.

91. Minorities, particularly minority women, are poorly represented in political life at all levels, especially at state and local governments. The Special Rapporteur notes the lack of information pertaining the situation and challenges faced by minority women, particularly in decision-making processes. Concrete and targeted measures are required to promote the active and effective political participation of women at all levels. Affirmative action measures to promote minorities and minority women in political life, including the use of quotas in political parties, should be considered.

92. The Special Rapporteur commends the Government for the establishment of the National Dialogue Conference 2014 as a nationwide forum where the diverse stakeholders gathered and discussed the current political, social, economic and cultural issues, including long-standing minority issues. She encourages the Government to continue providing similar platforms for an inclusive participation of groups in decision-making processes as meaningful ways to foster dialogue and find consensual solutions to minority issues.

Census and statistics

93. Nigeria does not collect or analyse data disaggregated by ethnicity, religion or language. The Special Rapporteur encourages collection and analysis of disaggregated data, which are essential for Nigeria to fully map its population and provide a complete picture of its diversity and the socioeconomic conditions of its various groups. The advantages, in terms of strategic planning and implementation of effective policies to ensure the rights of disadvantaged minorities and other marginalized groups, outweigh the concerns. Provisions should be put into place to safeguard against discrimination, stigmatization and any misuse of sensitive information, in accordance with international standards of personal data protection and privacy.

94. At the federal, state and local levels, disaggregated data gathering, including the national census and social surveys, should be conducted and statistical analysis undertaken to provide an accurate picture of the population and key characteristics and socioeconomic status of different groups. Census questions should allow open and multiple responses to enable respondents to self-identify according to their national, ethnic, religious and linguistic affiliation, including multiple identities.

95. The scarce disaggregated data available reveal worrying issues in relation to socioeconomic rights, including high poverty and unemployment rates and regional disparities in access to education. The fulfilment of economic and social rights is not only a human rights obligation but also a fundamental step to foster social peace and stability. Measures to improve the socioeconomic conditions of the population, particularly of those most disadvantaged groups, must be carefully planned and implemented on the basis of comprehensive data.

Civil society organizations

96. The Special Rapporteur was impressed by the high quality of civil society organizations. She acknowledges that their work makes a fundamental contribution to raising awareness and tackling minority rights concerns, and encourages them to continue their valuable work. She also urges the Government to enhance cooperation with civil society organizations and support them in all necessary and possible ways so that they can continue their valuable work, often in essential areas where Government action is lacking.

National Human Rights Commission

97. The Special Rapporteur commends the work of the National Human Rights Commission as a key institution for the promotion and protection of the human rights. She welcomes the enhanced status given to the Commission in 2010, widening its mandate and powers. Sufficient resources should be allocated to enable the Commission and its regional offices to carry on their work and to ensure adequate and dedicated attention to the issues of minorities in each region. Its independence must be always preserved to duly fulfil its fundamental mandate. Recruitment of staff from diverse ethnic and religious communities should be ensured.

Linguistic rights

98. The linguistic diversity in Nigeria includes hundreds of languages. However, many of them are seriously endangered and some have become extinct. The Special Rapporteur recognizes the considerable efforts of the Government to safeguard endangered languages and encourages it to continue and intensify its efforts to preserve Nigeria's rich language heritage.

99. The multiplicity of minority languages poses challenges to the feasibility of mother-tongue instruction. The Special Rapporteur recalls the 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, under which States are required to take appropriate measures to provide mother-tongue language education or instruction wherever possible. The Government should make available adequate funding and take practical steps, including provision of teaching materials to assist teaching of and instruction in minority languages in public schools. Where numerous languages exist in a locality, the Government should consider formal and informal methodologies and programmes based on local language traditions, needs and requirements.

100. Among the difficulties faced by speakers of minority languages is the scarce presence of minority languages in public and private media. Media can play a significant role in the promotion and preservation of minority endangered languages and consequently the preservation of minority cultures and identities. The allocation of specific spaces for local languages on television channels and radio programmes, as well as in the written press, should be encouraged and supported.

Education

101. The Government must take appropriate actions to ensure that all children, regardless their social status, have access to compulsory education. Special measures should be adopted to combat school dropouts, including those owing to poverty and socioeconomic factors, and ensure school attendance of children belonging to minorities, particularly minority girls, including assessments of the situation of minority children, increased provision of minority-language education, increase funding for education and collaboration with state and local governments and civil society organizations.

102. A specific subject on citizenship education should be introduced in the school curriculum to provide students with the fundamentals of human rights, political institutions and the rule of law. Knowledge of the diversity of Nigeria, including the history of its diverse ethnic, religious and linguistic groups and communities and their important contribution to enriching Nigeria's culture, society and unity, should also be an integral part of the national education programmes.